

# The Sentinel

## Greenbelt City Council opposes rail construction in Beltsville

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Construction of an intermodal railway in Beltsville was opposed by Greenbelt City Council at its regular meeting April 11.

The proposed facility, which would be constructed between Sunnyside Avenue and Powdermill Road, is part of a plan suggested by Maryland Department of Transportation to implement changes along the CSX rail network.

"The program itself is not a bad program," Mayor Judith Davis said. "They are trying to keep truck traffic more or less off the roads by getting these double containers on the trains."

The changes proposed by the Maryland Department of Transportation aim to increase the flow of rail traffic throughout the nation by creating a new "doublestack" rail corridor that would connect Baltimore and other key Mid-Atlantic ports to markets in the Midwest and South.

Because of the low clearance of the Howard Street tunnel, there is currently no way to connect to Greenbelt without the proposed changes.

Davis said she had at least 13 reasons why the city council wanted to oppose the project.

These reasons included that the site hosts a large number of rare plants and is currently 100 percent wooded with "tremendous" tree canopy, one of the last remaining natural filters for Indian Creek and 75 percent FEMA designated flood plain as well as being identified as 75 percent wetlands.

Citizens of Greenbelt also opposed the proposal. Doug Love, who teaches physical geography at Prince George's Community College, commented on the delicate ecosystem.

Love said that the mineral glauconite is "very common" in the Indian Creek streambed, and this mineral causes iron stone to form.

"That's what it should do is form iron stone and not get into the watershed. So disturbing it would be a big problem," Love said. "The land is the way it should be right now, and it should be protected."

Councilmember Leta Mach said because the project aims to create more efficient use of the port of Baltimore, the facility should be closer to that port.

"If the intermodal facility is put there, it will be 24/7 flow of truck traffic onto highways that cannot handle it," Davis added.

The city council will send a letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation to urge that the site be removed from the list of potential construction sites for the plan.